

Spider 1

Level 2 Difficulty

Spider 1 is one of the top poses I recommend for lower back and hip problems. It loosens and strengthens the lower back and hips while adjusting misalignments in the hips. It's ideal for athletic warm ups and to prepare you to do many difficult poses. People find it works right away and the benefits just keep building the more you use it. No wonder it's on the *Serenity Yoga Foundation Pose* list. Some people find it a little awkward to hold on to their foot in this pose. Hopefully, you'll find some of the tips here helpful for that.

Main Benefits:

Loosens & strengthens lower back, inner thighs, hip rotators.

Body Parts Used by This Posture: Lower back, sacrum, inner thighs, hip rotators, knees, toes & shoulders (a little)

Combines Well with: Spider 2 (together they make up Spider 3)

Compensating Pose (Follow Up with a Brief Repetition of): Leg Fold 1

Alternative Pose / Warm Up Pose: If this pose is too demanding for you or you can't get your body parts to come together, then you might like to try the Leg Fold.

Warms You Up for: Spider 2, 3, Lunge, Chest Expansion, Leg Clasp, Back Stretch, Leg Over, Rishi's Posture, Leg Stretch

Builds You Up for: Spider 2, 3, Chest Expansion, Chest Expansion – Leg Extensions, Shoulder Stand, Plow, Back Bends, Hip Openers, Lunges, Leg Overs, Twists, Balancing Poses

Build Up to with: Leg Fold 1, Frog, Jumping Frog, Reclining Butterfly, Butterfly (Cobbler), Happy Baby, Dead Bug

Good for These Practice Goals: Morning yoga; senior's yoga; improve personal posture; meditation warm up; sports warm up; great for runners, bikers, swimmers, marital artists



Recommended for These Health

Conditions: carpal tunnel syndrome, excessive bloating, fibromialgia, hip misalignment, chronic hip injury, chronic lower back injury, menstruating (having your period) at this moment, pregnancy - throughout, restless legs, sciatica, scoliosis, pronation of feet & or hips.

Avoid Under these Health Conditions: arthritis in fingers, knees, toes; compressed disc in middle back, lower back; diverticulitis; femoral, hiatal or umbilical hernia; femoral; fresh injury or surgery in shoulder, hip, lower back or knee; fresh whiplash; pins in knee or ankle region; prolapsed intestines or uterus; high blood pressure (untreated); osteoporosis in: hips, knees, toes;

Best Breathing Theme Matches: Red Level Breathing Themes 1, 2, 2.5 & 3; Orange Level Breathing Themes 5, 7, 8; Green Level Breathing Themes 14, 15A, 15, 15B, and Breathing Themes 20, 21, 22B and 23

Best for Flexibility or Strength: Flexibility

Best if Movement Oriented or Static: Static

Traditional Pose Type: Lunge

Energy Center Used: Root (and belly somewhat)

Difference from Spider 2: Spider 1 is a warm up for Spider 2. Spider 1 is mostly an inner thigh & sacrum stretch. Spider 2 is a hamstring & lower back stretch and work out for your abdominals & shoulders.

Basic Instruction

Start

lying on your back, legs together, arms by your sides



Next

Bring one knee up toward your chest



Next

Reach down and hold on to the tops of your toes. Do this with the arm that corresponds to the leg. **Arm goes inside the leg.**



Next

Keeping your knee close to your chest, tug your foot in a motion down the line of the arm toward your shoulder, so that the foot and the knee are coming closer to your head.



You Will Feel It In

Your inner thigh & in your lower back

Key

Your knee stays bent and your heel stays close to your body. The motion is like a lunge.

Key

Your arms goes *inside* the leg. This will turn the knee and leg out slightly but do not allow the leg to wander out to the side any more than is necessary.

Hold for 6 breaths or until you feel you can go no deeper into the stretch, even with breathing out.

Release

Lower your leg. Return your arms to your sides. Feel your hips and leg sinking into the ground.

Then Switch legs.

Do 3 Repetitions each side, alternating sides.



Detail

Wrap your fingers over the tops of your toes and secure them over the ball of your foot.

By having the arm inside the leg, you free the hip rotators enough to put the stretch deep into the hip, lower back and sacrum.

Spider 1

Level 2

Modifications

If you can't hold onto your toes, it's OK to hold onto your ankle or your leg. Try not to hold the foot from the instep or from the outer edges. If your fingers keep slipping or if you have arthritis in your fingers or toes, try lacing your fingers in between your toes. As a final option, a yoga strap can work, when wrapped across the middle of the foot.

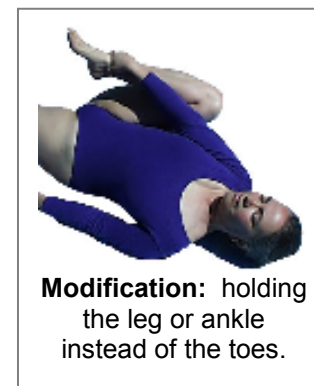


Key Allow the knee and leg to come as straight back toward the head as in a Lunge. To get the full benefits of the pose, it's essential to keep the knee well bent not to allow the leg to 'open' (not to allow it to straighten up)

Key Hold on to your foot with the corresponding hand, (left hand for left leg, right hand for right leg). Also, do not cross the other one over to assist; this will warp your alignment and close off your breathing.



Lacing fingers in among your toes might help your grip.



Modification: holding the leg or ankle instead of the toes.



Several errors are shown here, including twisting the foot, having the arm inside the leg and stretching the leg upward a little rather than having it fully bent. These are rotating the leg outward, reducing the benefits of the stretch and increasing the risk of injury. Here Corinne is also sitting up while doing the stretch, which reduces the flexing in the lower back and hip.

Common Errors

Do not allow your knee to open out away from the body, as shown in the photo to the right and in the photo to the left. Keep your knee close to the body & your arm. When the knee swings out, you lose much of the stretch and risk injuring your knee. Allowing the knee to wander outward often goes with the following error, of twisting your ankle to reach the toes:

Do not twist your foot in order to hold on to it. This can strain your ankles and will mean you're not pulling straight back on the leg. This often happens when people grip the edge of their foot, rather than the top. If you can't hold your toes or the ball of the foot, try holding on to your leg instead and focus on tugging your knee and leg straight back.

Try not to have your hand and arm outside of the leg. This will change the stretch. By keeping your arm on the inside, it frees up the hip rotators enough to put the stretch deeply into the lower back and sacrum. This will also allow you to make a smooth transition from Spider 1 to Spider 2 when the time comes.

Do not stretch your leg upward during Spider 1. Stretching upward is what you'll be doing in Spider 2.

Do not sit up while doing Spider 1, (save that for Spider 2). Sitting up does not allow the hip and lower back muscles to relax enough to go deeply into the lunging movement.



Discovery Exercises

- Experiment with having your arm on the *inside* and then on the *outside* of the leg. Notice how that changes the stretch. For an accurate *Spider 1*, have your arm on the inside of your body.
- Experiment with having your knee tucked close to your body, and then have it swing out away from the body. (Do this gently and not to any great extent. Stop before anything in your hip or knee hurts.) Notice how that changes the stretch. To do *Spider 1* correctly, have your leg & knee tucked closely to your body.

Breathing



Start

Breathe in

Breathe out, letting your weight settle & body relax.



Breathe in

Breathe out bringing your knee up toward your chest & holding on to your foot.

Breathe in and out as you firm your grip and settle into place



Hold for 2 – 6 breaths or to the limit of your ability to stretch.

(Breathing in, & out see if the stretch willingly increases, without forcing it.)

Release

Breathe in,
Breathe out, lowering leg and arm to the floor.

Wait while the tension in the muscles dissolves.

Switch, do other side.

Repeat 3 times each side

Yellow Level Breathing

Start by relaxing into your starting position.

Breathe in, bringing up your knee
Pause your breath while you hold on to your foot or your leg
Breathe out, tugging the knee closer to your upper body

Pause your breathing and your movements

Then, for the repetitions:

1. Breathe in, relaxing the stretch slightly, but not letting go of your foot or leg
2. Pause your breathing and your movements
3. Breathe out, going more deeply into the stretch. As long as you're breathing out, seek out more and more of a stretch. See if your body is willing to go farther than last time.
4. Pause your breathing and your movements.

Repeat steps 1 – 4 for several breaths. 5 breaths is ideal.

Great Combinations Using Spider 1

Combination 1 – Level 2 Difficulty

Spider 1, held for several breaths, then directly into **Spider 2**. **Switch Sides**. **Repeat**. Very good for rebuilding the lower back, relieving sciatic pain, improving the flexibility of the hip rotators, while supplying a great hamstring stretch.

Hold each position until you reach the limit of your ability to stretch, feeling your body letting go and relaxing more and more into the stretch with each breath out (*Red Level Breathing Theme*), or use *Yellow* or *Green Level Breathing Themes* for great results also.



Combination 2 – Level 5 Difficulty

Spider 1, held for several breaths, then **Hip Opener** for several breaths, returning to *Spider 1* position, then go into **Spider 2** for several breaths. **Option:** Go from *Spider 2* into **Leg Over 2**. Hold *Leg Over 2* for several breaths before returning to the *Spider 1* position and then releasing the pose. **Switch Sides**. **Repeat**. This combination is even better than the above combination for rebuilding the lower back, relieving sciatic pain, improving the flexibility of the hip rotators while supplying a great hamstring stretch. It also releases the psoas and stretches out the trapezius in the shoulders. However, it is more demanding, being Level 5 in difficulty, and, as a remedial combination, it requires that you've restored your lower back and sciatic somewhat with the *Spider 1 & 2* combination first.



Hold each position until you reach the limit of your ability to stretch, feeling your body letting go and relaxing more and more into the stretch with each breath out (*Red Level Breathing Theme*), or use *Yellow* or *Green Level Breathing Themes* for great results also.